

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 16, 2004

Recognize The Allied Troop Contributions In Iraq And Afghanistan

On January 26th of this year, President Bush denied Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski's personal request to loosen U.S. visa requirements on Poland's non-immigrant visitors into the United States. Instead, President Bush deferred the matter to Congress, saying Congress "decides the visa policy."

Despite Poland's strong alliance with the United States, including 2,300 combat troops currently deployed in Iraq, Poland is ineligible for the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Currently, 28 nations are eligible for the VWP, including Spain, which announced a complete withdrawal of its 1,400 troops from Iraq.

Non-immigrant nationals of countries admitted into the VWP are allowed virtually unrestricted travel in and out of the United States for 90 days at a time. They require no interviews with U.S. consulates, and do not have to pay the \$100 visa processing fee.

For poor nationals of non-VWP countries seeking to attend to an ailing relative, or participate in a wedding, visa denials become very emotional and create economic hardship. Polish nationals earn an average of \$400/month, and have to pay the \$100 visa-processing fee regardless of whether they are issued a visa.


As a result, as Co-Chairs of the Central and Eastern European Caucus, we have introduced H.R. 4834, a bill that would waive the \$100 visa-processing fee for nationals of countries that have combat troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, and are not eligible for the Visa Waiver Program. This legislation would apply to ten countries:

Country	Troops In Afghanistan	Troops In Iraq	Non-Immigrant Workload in FY 2003
Albania	22	70	15,763
Azerbaijan	22	150	3,185
Bulgaria	38	500	31,652
Czech Republic	17	400	39,639
Estonia	6	47	9,340
Hungary	13	300	26,725
Latvia	11	150	10,199
Lithuania	2	130	15,400
Poland	18	2,300	160,515
Romania	27	734	53,927
Total:	176	4,781	366,345

While retaining the screening requirements for foreign non-immigrant visa applicants, this legislation rewards our allies and gives incentive to keeping the international presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. If H.R. 4834 is enacted, we estimate the U.S. will lose \$40,000,000 per year in tax revenue from these ten countries. However, if these countries were to withdraw the approximately 5,000 troops from combat, \$40 million is only 3% of the annual cost to replace these foreign troops with U.S. personnel.

To co-sponsor H.R. 4834, please contact Ted Bush of Congressman Lipinski's office (5-5701) or C.W. Estoff of Congressman Quinn's office (5-3306). Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI
Member of Congress


JACK QUINN
Member of Congress